

IN THE CLAIMS:

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1. (Currently amended) A composition for coating a metal substrate which is intended to be fabricated and overcoated, said composition comprising a silica or silicate binder and zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate, said binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio of at least 6:125:1, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, and wherein the silica or silicate particles have an average size equal to or smaller than 10 nm.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Previously amended) The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous solution of an alkali metal or ammonium silicate stabilized by a silicate substituted by at least one anionic group of lower pKa than silicic acid, having a pH of 7 to 10.5 prepared by lowering the pH of a solution of silicate and silicate by ion exchange.
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Currently amended) The coating composition according to claims—claim 1, wherein the silica particles have an average size in the range 3 nm to 10 nm.
6. (Previously amended) The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder further comprises a silane coupling agent.
7. (Previously amended) The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder further comprises an organic resin.
8. (Previously amended) The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein it is a water-based shop primer.

9. (Currently amended) A Water-based shop primer for the coating of steel substrates which are intended to be fabricated and overcoated, said composition having a solid content of 20 - 40 % by volume, comprising:

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- an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio of at least 6:1, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, and wherein the silica or silicate particles have an average size equal to or smaller than 10 nm,
- 10 - 90 % by volume of the coating on a dry film basis of zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy having a mean particle size in the range 2 to 12 μm ,
- 0 - 35 % by weight, based on silica or silicate, of an organic resin,
- 0 - 30 % by weight, based on silica or silicate, of a silane coupling agent,
- optionally non-zinc pigment(s) having a mean particle size below 3 μm , and
- optionally a pot-life extender.

B2

10. (New) A composition for coating a metal substrate which is intended to be fabricated and overcoated, said composition comprising a silica binder and zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol and an alkali metal silicate, said binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio of at least 15:1, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, and wherein the silica sol particles have an average size equal to or smaller than 10 nm.